Industrial Reconstruction Series, No. 1

An Industrial Programme for a Chinese City

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The Industrial Committee

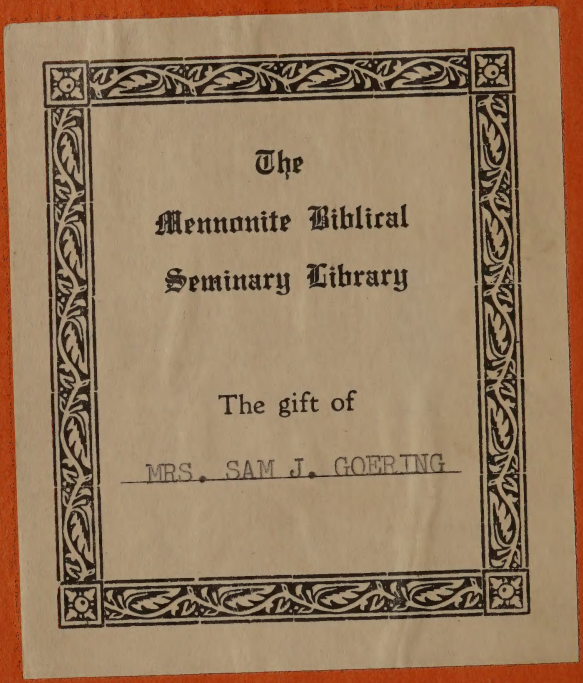
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AN INDUSTRIAL PROGRAMME FOR A CHINESE CITY

The following suggestions are issued by the National Christian Council in order to help local committees in facing the complex situation in their own cities. It is well understood that no general lines can be laid down suitable without adaptation to all centres. It is hoped, however, that these ideas may be made the basis of discussions which will lead to practical action of the highest value.

At the present time the main aim of the local committee will in most centres be the creation of a truer appreciation of the nature of the problems, the actual conditions and the urgent need *in the minds of all members of the Christian Church itself.* It is here that our work begins. If the church does not know, still more if it does not deeply care, how can it move those outside? Knowledge and passion should go hand in hand. Sympathy without facts will miss fire. Begin here and the remaining work becomes possible because we have the instrument ready to hand for the work viz : an informed and inspired church.

1. Investigation of local conditions :

An essential preliminary to effective social action being a knowledge of the facts, the committee will probably do well to decide upon one or two well-defined problems which should first be studied. It should then consider what facts are relevant to the particular problem and how best to secure them.

It may be well to begin at once with this question, "Is the Church itself observing the three standards set by the National Christian Conference? If not, why not?" Or again we may ask Christian employers whether they are doing so and what are the difficulties

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they experience. Exact hours of work, returns as to child labour, and so forth should be collected in any industry studied.

Again an investigation into costs of living might be carried on. The various items in the family budget should be specified, families should be chosen on some definite principle, the proportion of the whole income spent on food and other items should be discovered. This needs tact and patience. When facts are revealed they should be considered in relation to similar data in the budgets of those investigating. Why is there so great a difference? What are the essential human needs? What constitutes a living wage? Such are some of the questions we must seek to answer.

Investigators should first study the matter together and see how to set about making their enquiries. They should compare notes as they proceed, and help one another in facing any difficulties. The material should be brought together in a way calculated to show its real significance. A meeting ought then to be called to consider what the duty of the local committee is in face of the facts brought to light.

II. Local conferences :

The calling of a local conference should not as a rule be undertaken unless facts can be submitted which challenge action. The facts should be presented as clearly as possible and allowed to make their own impression. An address calling attention to fundamental principles and ideals may be desirable. The conference should face a specific problem and the object should be (1) to gain a common conviction as to the way in which the solution is to be sought ; (2) to enlist each member in taking his share in working for it. It is well to concentrate on the next step so that enthusiasm may not be roused and then allowed to ebb away for lack of any specific suggestions. After a good

conference people frequently ask, "What can I do?" While it may be well to urge people to find their own answer it is also true that many need a good deal of help in the process.

III. A Study group:

The first answer to this question will, in many cases, be "Join a study group." Such a group should contain the keen people who are determined to know all they can and who will really be the leaders in any advance. A careful plan of study should be thought out and kept to, although not excluding work on side lines which will really contribute to the main end. The Commission on 'Church and Industry' is ready to supply suggestions as to courses of study and lines of special investigation.

It is suggested that the *three lines mentioned above are suitable for early efforts by any local committee.* They provide a starting point for other activities along such lines as the following. It is, however, very important not to undertake too much at first. These suggestions are made rather for the more developed groups where the preliminary work has been well done. They should not be launched until a fairly strong group has been formed and is assured of local backing.

i. Publicity. When facts are known and a policy in relation to them has been thought out, all avenues for bringing facts and proposals before the public should be considered. Some programmes need publicity, others would be destroyed thereby. The right kind of publicity is a very important point. For example, if the only persons who have any power to improve conditions are employers of labour, a type of publicity which holds them up to public execration may block the way of advance, whereas a publicity which recognizes their good will (or possible good will) and yet the extreme difficulty of their position

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may win them to cooperation. Public opinion is often needed to put over a reform, but in some cases employers welcome it as the support they need to do what they know to be right, whereas in other cases it can only be used to shame an unwilling employer to act.

Publicity may be secured by use of the public press, by special literature, by public meetings, by use of the pulpit, through posters, approach to leading citizens, &c. All methods should be explored and the most suitable used.

ii. Education of the Christian Community. While the public conscience should be stirred from time to time to meet special needs there is a continual need for intensive education of the Christian Community. This should be.

(1) to help Christians to see that their Christian faith must issue in social service.

(2) to give a more concrete idea of what brotherhood means when applied to all alike.

(3) to create a passion for such service.

(4) to secure the full cooperation of the Church in dealing with a specific situation.

This educational process must be continued all the time through the regular departments of church work, the pulpit, the Sunday School, the Christian Endeavor, the study group, &c. It should be the aim of the local committee to see that every church in the area is working at this matter and to get occasional reports on what is being done. A rally of the churches or of those in study groups or young people's societies may be a very useful way of keeping this matter to the fore.

iii. Special Conferences: In addition to the type of conference mentioned above other types may be of value for special needs.

a. A study conference when intensive work can be done for a week or so by a group who wish to get a thorough grasp of some particular problem.

b. A conference of employers and employed to deal either with an immediate situation in a special industry, or to create a better mutual understanding with a view to advance being made toward better conditions, etc.

c. A conference of teachers, pastors or other group whose particular approach to the industrial problem can be studied in detail with a view to better equipment to meet the need and an advanced policy in school, church, etc.

iv. Establishment of a Social Centre. In some cities such a centre will serve to concentrate attention on this aspect of the Church's work, provide opportunity for research, personal contact with the workers and ameliorative work. It must be clearly understood that the Church's task does not end with amelioration, however valuable that may be. A social centre which stops there may be a slave to the conscience, rather than a real expression of the fundamental message of the church. At the same time such activities have a real place both in themselves and as a means of showing the workers what the real problem is. The local committee should regard it as a prime duty to see that a social centre does not degenerate into "putting a piece of plaster on the sore," but that the workers always keep before them the great task of the Church to lead men to desire and work for a social order which expresses the principles of Jesus Christ in the fullest way—the Kingdom of God on earth.

v. Specific Experiments. It may appear as the facts are revealed and pondered that the only way in which a permanent contribution can be made is by

starting a piece of industry on a small scale, perhaps on a cooperative basis, or in some way which will show clearly that the chief motive is not gain but public service. It should be within the purview of the local committee to suggest or even on occasion to initiate such an experiment. The backing of the whole Christian community should be sought. Grave risks, financial and otherwise, are often involved. The work needs the best expert advice available. The N. C. C. seeks to gain such information as may help it to advise in regard to any local scheme and it would urge local committees to keep it informed as to any action they may take under this heading so that the experience of any one group may be available for all. Even if such experiments seem to fail they may serve a very useful purpose especially if detailed records are preserved which show why they failed and wherein they succeeded.

vi. Discovering and Training of Special Workers. In the wide field of social service one of the most urgent needs is trained workers. There are very many calls for such and China today has very few indeed. The local committee should keep a keen lookout for promising men and women. They should be tried out in undertaking investigations or in specific pieces of work. If they show promise they should be given opportunities for further reading and study as well as for service in varied lines. The N. C. C. stands ready to help here whenever possible. Such workers may have gifts justifying a longer course of preparation and leading to wider fields of service than can be offered locally. The local group may make a big contribution to the country as a whole by discovering and giving the first opportunity to such national servants. It may also offer experience along special lines which may be made available for workers from other centres. The N. C. C. desires to have

information which will help it to coordinate training in its preliminary as well as in its more advanced stages.

vii. Agitation in regard to some particular evil. Every now and again a special problem, such as child labour, seems to detach itself from the great mass of wrong conditions as one on which we should concentrate. At such a time the local committee may have to turn all its energies in the one direction, using every means for securing and publishing all the facts, offering its services to local bodies who may be dealing with the matter, getting out special literature, &c. In these circumstances again it is peculiarly necessary to see that the methods used are consistent through and through with the principles for which we stand, that there is no colouring or distorting of facts to prove even a true case, no pressure of the wrong type brought to bear on individuals, that the appeal be to the higher rather than to the lower motives. A campaign won for a right cause in the wrong way sometimes reacts very unfavourably on the whole situation.

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